



---

## **PRESS RELEASE**

---

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**September 6, 2001**

For Information Contact Public Affairs  
Mike Johns (602) 514-7566

# **TRW-VSSI FINED FOR HAZARDOUS WASTE VIOLATIONS**

**PHOENIX, ARIZONA** -- The United States Attorney's Office for the District of Arizona announced that TRW Vehicle Safety Systems, Inc., was sentenced this week to pay \$12 Million in criminal fines to resolve charges that it violated hazardous waste laws at its air-bag manufacturing plant in Queen Creek, Arizona.

Vehicle Safety Systems Inc. (VSSI), a wholly owned subsidiary of TRW Inc., pleaded guilty in January 2001 to federal and state criminal charges and entered plea agreements with the United States and Arizona. The Michigan-based company will pay a \$6 million criminal penalty to the United States and a \$6 million criminal penalty to Arizona. The plea agreements also require VSSI to establish an environmental management system at two air-bag factories in Arizona and one in Nevada.

VSSI uses sodium azide, a toxic and potentially explosive compound, to manufacture vehicle air-bag restraint systems. Sodium azide is a component of the propellant that inflates the air-bag.

The federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act requires companies that produce, store, transport and dispose of hazardous waste to manage it in accordance with regulatory requirements.

The company admitted that it knew a landfill in Mobile, Arizona, was not authorized to accept the hazardous waste the company sent there, and that the sodium azide-contaminated waste was potentially harmful

(MORE)

to the public and the environment. VSSI also admitted that it knew it was illegal to store this waste onsite at its air-bag factory, without a permit.

The plea agreement directs VSSI to create and maintain for three years an environmental compliance plan at its three plants. As part of the plan, VSSI will hire an auditor to evaluate its operations and report to state and federal regulators.

In a separate civil action related to its conduct, VSSI agreed to pay a \$5.6 million civil penalty under a settlement filed in January 2001. This civil agreement obligates VSSI to perform more than \$5.7 million worth of projects to enhance the environment and contribute \$1.5 million to clean up the Butterfield landfill in Mobile, Arizona, which is contaminated with hazardous waste produced by VSSI. As part of the civil settlement, VSSI will complete a comprehensive assessment of its facility, determine whether corrective measures are needed to address pollution, and undertake any necessary measures at the site, such as closing surface impoundments and related sumps and tanks.

The prosecution was handled by Avi Garbow of the Department of Justice, Environmental Enforcement Section, Washington, D.C.

RELEASE NUMBER: 2001-091

# # #